

*Mission Dolores, San Francisco, close to where the brothers live and where Brother Guire is Curator.*



## Franciscans in the Midst of Empire

### The American Province SSF

by Thomas SSF

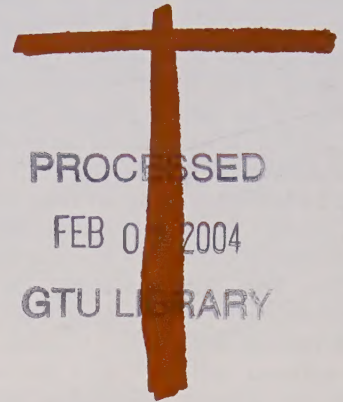
To be Franciscan in the Episcopal Church of the United States is a deeply counter-cultural project. Although the United States is in many ways a religious country, we approach religion as a highly individual pursuit. The idea of living in a religious community, of tying the salvation of your soul to the salvation of souls not your own, of living and praying with relative strangers, seems to most Americans to be insanely romantic, a symptom of deep pathology, or at the very least vaguely cult-like.

In addition, the Episcopal Church, which has both catholic and protestant roots, has historically had no easy time with the whole question of religious orders. The very first Franciscans in the Episcopal Church, the Society of the Atonement, joined the Roman Catholics because they felt there was no support for the religious life in the Episcopal Church. Even today, religious orders are a bit 'off to one side' in the general polity of the Church. This is both our burden and our glory: on one hand, we're free to witness to who we are without being saddled with the restraints of the wider institutional church; on the other hand, we continually complain that 'no one knows about us,' and 'we are the best-kept secret in the Episcopal Church.'

Having said that, it's amazing to me, given that there are only fourteen of us brothers at

this writing, how much we affect the life of the Church in those places where we live and work. We are a real presence in the life of the three dioceses of the Episcopal Church where we have houses, but our reach actually extends much further. We've made mission visits to the Dioceses of Panama, El Salvador, and most recently, Mexico. We have a house in Brownstown, Jamaica, and run a parish in Trinidad. We have active dialogues with Franciscans in Puerto Rico and Brazil, who are interested in deepening their ties with us.

The other miracle which is being constantly worked in our midst is the ways in which we, a community composed primarily of Caucasians of Northern European stock, continually reach out to cultures and ethnic groups which are not native to us.



## Global SSF?

An extravagant claim - especially when it is realised that this issue is concerned only with the First Order Brothers and makes only passing mention of First Order Sisters, and none of the Clares or of the numerically much larger Third Order.

But the ease of communication brought about by e-mail, and the fact that many brothers have experience across the provinces, have made possible this snapshot of the brothers' world - an expression of Francis' global ambition, and an echo of Christ's words, 'Go into all the world...'

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In San Francisco, Brother Guire has worked for the last five years or so as curator of the museum at Mission Dolores, one of the string of Franciscan Churches which dotted Spanish California. He's the first Franciscan to work there in well over a century and has opened really meaningful dialogue with the Olone tribe - the native people who once inhabited the area around the mission. Guire's focus has been to document the accomplishments of the mission system and to witness to the abuses committed at the missions in the name of religion. Both, he says, are ways in which justice can be served by an accurate telling of history.

At Little Portion Friary on Long Island, NY, Brother Clark is the Protestant Chaplain at Stonybrook University - the local branch of New York State University. In this overwhelmingly secular context, Clark has made contacts with Hindus, Moslems, and non-religious students. He's revived a heretofore moribund chaplaincy by inviting speakers like the Rev. Matthew Fox and the poet Robert Bly to speak at the university and conduct quiet days at the friary. In addition, he works with Long Island Can, a justice organization fighting for the rights of immigrants in that part of Long Island.

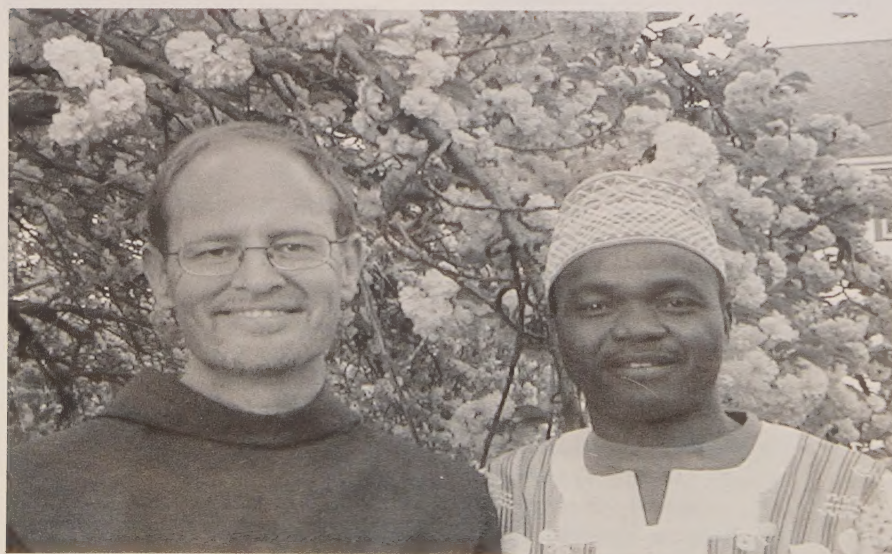
At St. Elizabeth's Friary, Brother John George and the other brothers run the Stephen Biko Center for Family Life. The Biko Center is a compendium of programmes aimed at children and their parents in this very poor neighbourhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn. The Center offers homework help, a computer learning centre, after-school and summer programmes. It also provides a safe place where the neighbourhood's teenagers can gather. They've actually formed their own company "Biko Inc.", which has periodic 'breakfast sales' in order to raise money. So occasionally, we're treated to the spectacle of about ten huge seventeen-year-olds cooking bacon and eggs for their neighbours.

As for me, my time since my return to New York from seminary in San Francisco has been spent at the Church of the Redeemer in Astoria, Queens, NY where I am the

assistant priest. Redeemer is an amazing place: there's a small English-speaking congregation and an enormous Spanish-speaking one. The Hispanics come from every country in Latin America except Paraguay. They face all the problems of immigrants everywhere - no documents, no English, and sometimes, no friends or family. This winter, St. Elizabeth's put up two Honduran men who showed up at Redeemer having walked and hitch-hiked from Honduras to New York City. My first year at Redeemer was spent learning to know these terrific people in our Spanish speaking congregation, and glorying in the open-hearted and generous way they worship God. Now my boss, Father Juan Quevedo, wants me to concentrate my efforts on the English speaking congregation. These are, after all, my people. So I, who have been among Guyanese, Jamaicans, Hondurans and Mexicans, must now learn to be with my own!

Lastly, we at St. Elizabeth's have spent the last six months or so living with our newest brother, Freddy Gildemeister, SSF. Freddy came to us from Lima, having been a Roman Catholic Franciscan for 28 years. He's spent the winter, spring and summer living with us, learning English, learning just how different we are from our Roman brothers. It's been an amazing, confusing and rewarding experience wading through the vagaries of language and custom. There have been lots of misunderstandings and lots of understanding. Last month we restored the habit to Freddy, just as we had at Chapter to our brother Richard Carderelli (both are former Roman Franciscans).

To be a friar in our Church at this terrible time in our history is to witness to the ways we daily maim the Body of Christ - through war, through the greed that is endemic to Western capitalism, through our rejection of our immigrant selves. But it is also to witness to the daily revelation of Jesus in front of us, around us, within us: In those who are different, in those who are just like us. *f*



*Brother Clark with an African friend, Malidoma Patrice Some*

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# Impressions of Papua New Guinea

by Justus SSF

**I am recently back from spending ten months with the brothers in Papua New Guinea. It was my fourth and longest visit.**

Papua New Guinea is a country with about 800 different languages and cultures. The mountainous topography continues to make travel and communication difficult. Many villages are a long walk along a bush path or track from the nearest road which is usually not paved and full of pot holes and wash-outs. Public transportation is limited. Mail and telephones are rare outside of the urban areas. Visitors to the friary would sometimes walk for a day or two to get there. After learning of his father's death, one of the brothers had to spend days waiting for a dinghy to take him on the next-to-last leg of his journey home and this was already after having traveled for over a week.

Early education is usually done in each village using tok pleis (the local language). Opportunities for education above basic literacy vary and high school is limited to the fortunate few. Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea Pidgin) and English are the second, third, or fourth languages of most of the brothers. This means that the brothers frequently only have a sixth to eighth grade education and are often not fluent in the languages used for common prayer.

Despite these conditions, my experience is that Papua New Guinea is marked by an overwhelming sense of abundance and a

practice of radical hospitality. This sense of abundance is displayed in several ways. If asked how many items are on a table, the response might be 'four or three' rather than the 'three or four' that Europeans and Americans might reply. The working premise is not 'save for a rainy day' but rather 'give no thought for tomorrow'. More than once we only had bananas to eat for days on end after having eaten the tinned fish - our staple protein - three meals a day for several days.

And yet hospitality reigns. Betel nut and cigarettes were freely shared. People were always willing to give a hand and provide food from their garden. If unexpected guests arrived while we were eating dinner, brothers would not hesitate to share the food they had with them, even if it meant giving them their plate of half-eaten food. Often in the capital Port Moresby while I was riding on a PMV (Public Motor Vehicle - the major means of transportation), someone would buy a coke bottle filled with water at one of the stops and after having a drink from it would pass the bottle to the other passengers before returning it to the vender to refill and sell again.

This is the context in which the brothers minister and have ministered for over 40

years. People come to visit and share in the life of the community and invite brothers to their villages to bear witness to the Gospel. Guests help with preparing food, cutting grass with bush knives, or whatever other tasks need to be done. People gather in the chapel - whether at the friary or in the villages - to pray Morning and Evening Prayer. The sharing - food, work, faith - is the important thing. The interaction is what counts. The interplay between things heavenly and things mundane is so familiar that it is taken for granted.

Some of the brothers have been schooled in 'western' skills and are priests, mechanics, nurses, teachers, administrators, etc. But that type of ministry is not the focus of the Franciscan life as it is in other parts of the world. Papua New Guinea is a place of 'being' rather than a place of 'doing'. The way the brothers live seems so like the way that I imagine Jesus and his disciples or Francis and his followers lived. Going about, regarding nothing as their own, but rather sharing in the lives of people, proclaiming their faith, living in the abundance of God.<sup>f</sup>

*Br Justus is normally resident in the United States of America.*



## PNG - UK: A Conversation

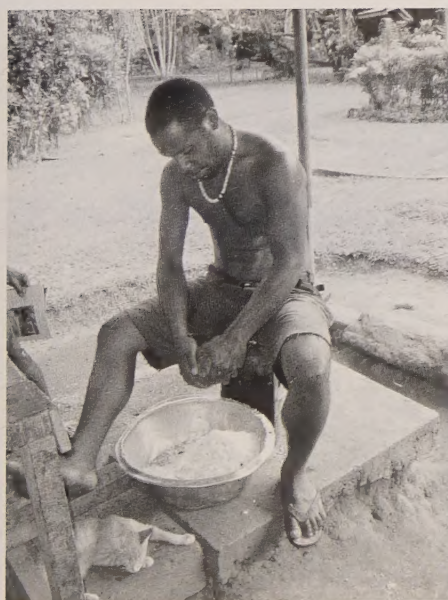
SSF Brothers Selwyn Suma and Anselm

**Brother Selwyn Suma recently spent a year in the European Province, and towards the end of his visit was with the brothers in Birmingham. He very generously spent time with Anselm, told his story, and shared some impressions of life at home as compared and contrasted with his experiences among us. What follows springs from that conversation, and is printed with his consent.**

Selwyn was born in 1970, the second of seven children - he has a brother in the PNG army, and a sister who teaches in a primary school. His grandfather left the village to work on a plantation and there met with missionaries, became a Christian, and returned with a group of friends to build a chapel. Later his father, newly married, was sent to St Francis' College at Haruro to train as a lay evangelist, and it was there that Selwyn was born, and baptised by Brother Brian. (He was not baptised Selwyn - he took that name as a friar.) The Suma family returned to the home village where Selwyn had his schooling and eventually became a helper with the youth work at the church, to which he became strongly committed. One

day, a group of SSF brothers from Haruro Friary arrived - they were on a missionary journey, walking from village to village, staying for a week, working in the gardens and holding Bible study groups and healing services. At the end of the week, not having seen much of a very shy Selwyn, they wisely invited him to join the team for a month, after which he went home and thought things over. There followed a six month visit to the friary as an enquirer, and then a year back home so as to reach the minimum age for the postulancy. Then, with the support and approval of his parents, he left home to start the process of becoming a brother in SSF.

*Continued on page 5*



*A brother preparing a meal*



# SSF in the Solomon Islands

by Daniel SSF

**In August 1970 SSF sent a group of four brothers to Honiara to live the Franciscan life and undertake ministry in the Capital. The ministry was to be with the many young people who were coming to Honiara for work, and excitement. They were suddenly removed from the constraints of life in the village and the pressure of family and tribal authority. Honiara was a fast growing town where people were learning to deal with life in an urban situation, a cash economy, and having lots of family and wontoks (people who speak the same language) living with them.**

We arrived in true Franciscan style, Brother Geoffrey, soon to become the Minister General, and I arrived by air, and as we left the plane and headed for Customs he said 'How much money have you got?' My reply was, 'None.' 'Well I've nothing,' said Geoffrey. So the ministry was begun, with three other brothers arriving two weeks later, two by sea and the other by air. Geoffrey left the Solomons very soon after.

*In the first few months we needed to become known and to meet as many people as possible, therefore we would be seen at the football matches, in the market, and generally walking around.*

From the beginning we made up our mind that we had to speak pidgin. Luckily Brother Michael Davis, who was the brother in charge, was a Solomon Islander so we were off to a flying start. Only pidgin was used at meals and we always invited someone to join us - with a few mis-starts at which everyone had a good laugh it was not long before we were all speaking and preaching in pidgin. While visiting the homes of Anglicans we also quickly learned how to recognise which Island or language group people came from, which was important as we all felt we needed to be able to say at least a few words in the various languages. With over 50 different languages in the Solomons this can be a very divisive factor and the one thing we wanted to do was to live alongside the people.

In the first few months we needed to become known and to meet as many people as possible, therefore we would be seen at the football matches, in the market, and generally walking around. We also started 'Patteson Club' which was held in the hall under the Diocesan Office. This was open every day at lunch time when we played records, had games and people could buy lunch - a cup of coffee and a bread roll. It was the only place in Honiara where this was

possible. In this setting we set up a counselling service, to which people of all denominations came.

This was the beginning, and I can remember writing to the Minister that this was the ideal Tropical Island paradise. Over the years this has changed, as with development and a large increase in population has come also an increase in corruption and crime. SSF has flourished: from the original four, 33 years later we now have over 50 brothers. Much of the ministry still follows a similar pattern and I find it a little embarrassing when the brothers say Patteson House is too noisy, too many people come to the house, and they treat it as if it is their own. This is what we set out to do and maybe did it too well. How do we change - tell people to go away and keep out? I am pleased to say the answer is always, No, we cannot do that.

So over the years we have built up a reputation that we are close to the people, we are trusted and people come with problems and when they need help.

Thus when the recent inter-island troubles started we were able to stand between the two sides. So SSF brothers, with the other three religious communities in the Church of

Melanesia, were able to minister across the battle lines. I will never forget making a telephone call from the United Kingdom to Honiara when the fighting was at its height. I asked, 'How are the brothers?' The reply was, 'Oh, they are all right. Just now they are at Alligator Creek between the two sides stopping the gun fire.' I had tears in my eyes, was very nervous and proud.

*Over the years we have built up a reputation that we are close to the people, we are trusted and people come with problems and when they need help.*

When I go back to the Solomons, the Islands are as beautiful as ever, the people are as delightful, Honiara is more developed and no longer the most beautiful town in the Pacific. I can easily recognise SSF houses for there is an atmosphere that is distinctive. They are our Melanesian Friaries. Many young men have tried out the Religious Life and found that it is not for them, which is true also for the Melanesian Brotherhood. This has in many ways been the strength of the Church in Melanesia, for the former brothers go back to their villages and are involved as catechists or some other way in the on-going life of the Church. For the strength of the Church is in the villages.

Those who remain as Franciscan brothers are involved in many different ministries, and trying to find ways to support themselves; they have a large extended family of members of the Third Order, Companions and friends. *f*



*By the meeting room at Hautambu Friary, during the 2003 Ministers' Meeting: Clifton Henry (PNG), Daniel (Minister General), Samuel (UK) and Derek (USA).*

## Compton Durville 2004

**Lent Quiet Day- 6 March**  
*The Merciful Heart of God*  
**Passiontide Quiet Day- 3 April**  
*Carpenter's Hands*

*Quiet Days are from 10-4*

\*

**Holy Week and Easter**  
**5 - 11 April**

Come for the whole week, or  
 Monday to Thursday, or Thursday to  
 Sunday

*Priest for the Triduum - Sue CSF*

\*

**Gardeners Practical and**  
**Prayerful: 20-23 April**

\*

**Open Afternoon:**  
**Saturday 1 May**

\*

*Please book for Quiet days, Holy  
 Week, and 'Gardeners'.*

*For the year's programme or more  
 details of the above, contact:  
 The Guest Sister, Compton Durville.*

## Hilfield Friary 2004

**Pre-Lent Quiet Day**  
**Saturday 21 February, 10 am**  
**to 4 pm**

\*

**Holy Week and Easter**  
**4 - 11 April**

*A residential week, including the  
 ceremonies of the Easter  
 Triduum,  
 led by a Brother SSF*  
*Bookings in writing please to  
 the Guest Wardens*

\*

**Secret Garden**  
**6 - 9 May from 2 - 5 pm**  
**Admission £2.00, teas available**

\*

**A Day for those Living Alone**  
**Saturday 22 May**

\*

*For more information about these or any  
 other events at Hilfield, please contact*

**The Friary Secretary TSSF,**  
**The Friary, Hilfield, Dorchester,**  
**Dorset DT2 7BE**

*Continued from page 3*

As a novice he was sent to Lae, and there taught Religious Education in primary school. Of the 800 languages spoken in PNG, Selwyn speaks three - sometimes when he is preaching in one of them the congregation helps him out with words he has lost!

On 19 May, 2002, and now as a life professed friar, he set out for England. The first leg of the journey was familiar - Popondetta and over the mountains to Port Moresby in a small aircraft, thence to Singapore where he had a first glimpse of the unfamiliar - the giant, towering Jumbo which was to take him across the world to London Heathrow. He slept not a wink, followed the passengers to passport control, and there (in private) had the medical examination which should have taken place earlier. He emerged to meet the next shock; the concourse which was very quiet when he left it had in the interval filled and was buzzing - so many people! Crowds like that are unknown at home. And then, his luggage had been left behind and only caught up that evening. So, without any reminder of home and in a crowd of strangers he found his way to the outside world which was cold and looked in

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vain for the brother who was to meet him. Then, a voice spoke - 'Will Brother Selwyn Suma, passenger from Singapore, please go to the information desk where Brother Damian is waiting for him.' He had arrived!

What did he find in this strange place? All the things we know about which divide rich countries from poor countries - rich food, the pace of life, motor cars. Back home, he travels the 70 miles from the friary to his parents' home in the back of a truck along an unmade road; here, there are motorways, railways, airports, coaches, buses, trains - and all the rest of it.

How does the European Province differ from the PNG Region, Pacific Islands Province? There's so much that we have in common, but what did Selwyn find which was, to him, strange? The first thing to come to mind was that while here we have diaries, guest books, appointments, clear expectations which all add up to a predictable day with times fenced off for worship and prayer - at Haruro Friary, people just turn up without any warning and whatever is happening at the time takes

second place to hospitality. That is, of course, in line with the Franciscan principles and the Christian gospel - but it deprives the Brothers of uninterrupted prayer times, and this security of time was what Selwyn most valued from his stay with us at Glasshampton, Alnmouth, Hilfield - and in smaller friaries.

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Of course, hospitality is inextricably linked with diet. Whereas at Hilfield we hope for the sun to shine on an event, and provide cakes and tea for the maybe 100 guests - at Haruro you can count on the sun, or at any rate the temperature, 400 people may turn up, and pigs and chickens are killed and cooked on the premises. (The everyday diet of the Brothers is mainly home grown vegetables.)

Among the Brothers at Haruro Friary there is no priest - they rely on neighbouring clergy for perhaps two masses during the week and all go to church on Sunday. One day, Selwyn himself hopes to be ordained and has the support of his Provincial Chapter in that. He has the prayers of all of us as he returns to PNG, that God will bless him in his vocation - and, may some of his prayer times be uninterrupted!f



*Brother Selwyn Suma some time  
 on his visit to the UK.*



# Australia-New Zealand Province: SSF 'Down Under'

by Christopher John SSF

**'On earth we have no abiding city' - and in the Australia / New Zealand Province of the Society of St Francis we have no abiding friary. We have had friaries burn down around us. We have had our friaries moved across streets. At times we have moved because we could no longer staff the house and its ministry. Often we have ourselves simply moved on when others could take over the ministry we established.**

Our history in the South Pacific goes back to the mid 1950s. Friars were despatched from England on great missionary journeys to Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand and the Solomon Islands. With gruelling timetables they preached, conducted missions, holy week programmes and retreats. They met vocational enquirers to all three orders and encouraged Companions. Names such as Charles, Geoffrey, Donald, Michael and Brian are well remembered by those who were influenced by the friars in those early days. Although they suffered neither imprisonment, beating, nor shipwreck their itineraries would have exhausted an apostle. The first friary was established in Australia in 1964 when brothers moved into a ramshackle, rat infested old farmhouse. This they decided was only to be a temporary measure until something more suitable was found. It was found, they moved in and it burnt down - with no loss of life but total loss of such possessions as Franciscans manage 'not to own.' So they moved back to the old farmhouse and over a number of years a variety of ministries flourished there such as residential care, farming, pottery, and a base for missions throughout Australia - as well as it being the training centre for novices.

Other houses and ministries came and went, the brothers at one stage nearly completely leaving Brisbane, save for two. Since then the friars have become re-established in a city church which had been thriving at one

time but had more recently become isolated, both geographically and ecclesiastically. There the brothers 'run' the parish in SSF's own unique style and also provide a place of hospitality and refuge for those on the fringes.

*All Franciscan  
communities here are  
newcomers.*

Elsewhere in Australia brothers are active in Newcastle Diocese where the closest thing to an established, unmoveable house can be found at the Hermitage of St Bernardine where a few brothers live in mud brick buildings. Hundreds of volunteers made hundreds of thousands of mud bricks to build not only the brothers' hermitage but a much larger complex of buildings for the Community of St Clare sisters. Having made just a few of those mud bricks myself I know how much sweat and backache goes into them. As a house of contemplative living the hermitage is established in a place of great natural beauty and where the walls of the buildings themselves speak of prayer.

Across the Tasman Sea there have been friars living in New Zealand since 1969. The beginning of the Auckland house sounds a bit like a joke: there was an Australian, a Solomon Islander, an Englishman and an American (no Irishman though) who had never lived together before and who had the challenge of making community life in a 'foreign' culture. Perhaps it was a sign that SSF had become international or at least multinational with friars who could be 'sent on mission' and dropped into a new country.

That first friary was at the Auckland City Mission but we didn't remain there for long. The strangest move perhaps was the time the building itself was moved across the road and around the corner. It's disconcerting to walk out the front door and find everything outside has changed.

More recently the brothers were establishing and managing the Auckland Diocesan retreat and conference centre. Their latest move took them from Auckland Diocese to Hamilton in the neighbouring Waikato Diocese where they are living as Anglican partners in an ecumenical social welfare venture and providing a residential, stable and praying core.

The province also has a presence in Asia and supports the Korean Franciscan Brotherhood through a covenant and the loan of myself as their mentor.

It is characteristic of the Australia / New Zealand province that its houses have been something like laboratories for exploring issues of cultural identity. The differences between Australians and New Zealanders are enough to start with - but the province's houses have also included Solomon Islanders, Malaysians, Papua New Guineans, Koreans, Canadians, Sri Lankans - not to mention the Americans and British. I doubt there has ever been a mono-cultural friary in the province.

This challenges many of our presumptions as to what 'ethnic identity' is. An example is provided by a well-known story in our oral tradition. Two brothers at the hermitage (both of them born in the 'other' hemisphere) were talking together to the effect that 'you don't see any ethnic people in Stroud village'. The other brother present with them (born in South-East Asia) replied, 'Would you two ethnic Englishmen like a nice cup of tea?' What exactly is 'ethnic'? What is 'other'? If 'ethnic' means 'coloured' - then what colour?

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This raises the issue of what our identity as Franciscans is. Is it the common denominator? The thing that is left once we strip away the national identities? It's not that simple since our Franciscan identities are something incarnated in our cultures and experiences. For example a New Zealander's assumptions about poverty, community, peace, and other Franciscan traits, will be very different from a Solomon Islander's.

The brothers began in Brisbane with nothing after the fire which destroyed their buildings. But Catholic Franciscan friars helped them out, even lending their habits. The brothers arrived in New Zealand just

*Continued on page 7*



**Brother Leo Anthony** with the Friary of the Divine Compassion, Hamilton, in the background.

## Minister's Letter

**Sister Helen Julian CSF**  
Minister Provincial of the First Order Sisters,  
European Province, writes:

Dear friends,

'Join the Franciscans and see the world'? Certainly for a Minister Provincial the annual Ministers' Meetings give an opportunity to do just this. In 2003 we met in New Zealand. It was my first visit to that country (indeed to the southern hemisphere) and I found it fascinating. Having travelled so far I was determined to see something of the country, so arrived early and after a night in Auckland embarked on a five hour bus journey to stay with the Sisters of the Love of God in Opononi.

At first as I watched the passing scenery I thought it was rather like home. As I looked more carefully I realised it wasn't at all. Magpies for example were large black and white birds - so far so familiar. But the pattern of black and white was quite different, they didn't have long tails, and were much bulkier. This experience was repeated many times over the next weeks. Fruit trees in gardens were not apples and plums but grapefruit and lemons. When asked 'how are you?' the normal answer wasn't 'fine' but 'good'. As I got over my jet lag I began to find this stimulating rather than confusing, and was able to resist the temptation to cling to the familiar and filter out what was strange.

On the first morning of our meetings we were welcomed onto the local marae - Kirikiroroa marae, the meeting place for the

Maori community in Hamilton. We waited outside until one of the older women came out of the richly carved meeting house and sang to call us in. Slowly we walked across the grass, and, removing our shoes first, entered the house. We sat down opposite the marae members and the welcome ceremony of speeches and songs unfolded. After tea and delicious scones we returned to have the symbolism of the house explained to us, and were taken on a tour of the many social services which are also based on the marae - health services, education, drug rehabilitation.

It was one brief remark which struck me most. The door of the marae, which divided the space inside into the 'home' area and that kept for visitors, is off centre. And it's the larger space which is kept for the guests. 'We want there to be room for everyone' said our guide.

Together with my own initial reaction to the strangeness of the New Zealand landscape, this made me reflect on difference, diversity, and strangeness, how far I welcome it and how far feel I need to defend myself from it.

We heard at our Ministers' Meeting about the rich diversity of Anglican Franciscan life, not just in C/SSF, but in new groups in covenant with us in Korea and Zimbabwe, and in a number of countries of Latin America, where contact is just beginning



with several vibrant groups inspired like us by the Franciscan way of being Christian. It's one small opportunity to make ample and welcoming space for the stranger.

But there are of course many more; within our individual lives where we shy away perhaps from God's call to let in the new, within our corporate lives where we can be unwilling to open up and learn from the 'strangers' who come to our doors.

As we begin a new year, perhaps we can resolve to 'see the world' anew through God's eyes. A place of infinite and exciting variety, where choosing to call the stranger into our house, our life, can be stimulating, exciting, and a way of meeting God.<sup>f</sup>

*Helen Julian CSF*

*Continued from page 6*

before Christmas and were welcomed to Christmas dinner at the Catholic Franciscan friary. These days our links with other Franciscans take many different forms - combined retreats, study, prayer, sharing in each other's celebrations - and just simply dropping in for coffee and chat. All Franciscan communities here are newcomers. We are equals in a society which is largely secular and rejects religious activity. We don't have the weight of history of western Christian divisions in these lands - except in as far as we've brought it in as part of our cultural baggage.

Finally, and this may sound like boasting but it isn't (New Zealanders are far too modest to do that....!) the Australia and New Zealand Province seems to have contributed beyond its size in many ways to the wider SSF. I don't just mean the number of recent and present office holders in the three orders but the ways in which brothers from this province have become part of the life of other provinces. Well - we may just seem to be brash colonials from down under and inclined to speak our minds but we are bold enough to believe that we have a part of the vision of Franciscan life and we hope that together we may help build the body of Christ.<sup>f</sup>

## Theme Prayer



Keep us faithful, O God,  
to the inspiration of blessed Francis,  
that seeking nothing for ourselves  
we may bring true riches to the world;  
through him who gave us himself,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

# Plaistow Friary

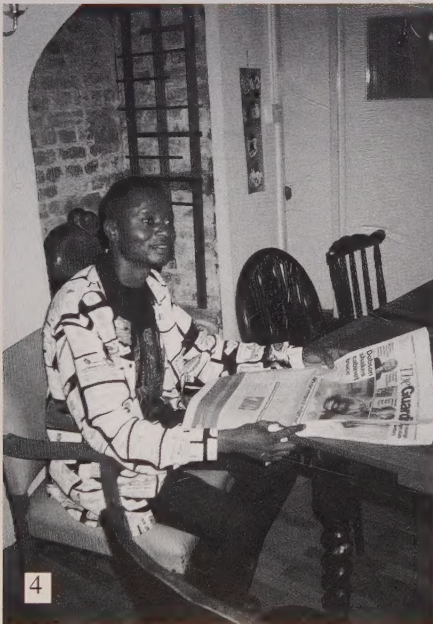
As one approaches the Friary from Plaistow High Street, the large mural painted on the side of the house and depicting biblical images and local activities comes into view (1). Inside, one might meet one of the three brothers connected with the friary: Arnold and Donald (2), and Julian (far right in 3), or one of the other residents, such as Jivel (4), or Kenny (5). A statue of St Francis greets one in the sitting room (6). Doreen and Daphne are busy in the Helping Hands office (7). Picture 8 is Donald near the conclusion of the Mass to celebrate his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood, and 9 is a sculpture of the Divine Compassion. Pictures 10 to 13 indicate something of the lush garden and the outdoor sitting area being put to good use; the chalet, which houses the chapel is in view in picture 11. Arnold, being so photogenic, completes the picture (14).



1



2



4



5



6



10



11

THE SOCIETY OF ST FRANCIS

1 THE BISHOPS PROTECTOR

George Connor Protector General  
8 Australia/New Zealand  
Roger Heft Deputy, Australia  
Johnny Iby SSF America  
Jim Kelsey CSF America  
Charles Koee Pacific Islands  
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Tevila Talanoa Deputy, PNG

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Joyce Minister General CSF  
Alfred BoonKong ANZ Province  
Athanasius Fafu Solomon Is. Region  
Clifton Henry PNG Region  
Derek American Province SSF  
Helen Julian European Province CSF  
Pamela Clare American Province CSF  
Samuel European Province SSF

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Derek  
John George  
Thomas

MT SINAI, LI Little Portion Friary

Clark Berge, Guardian  
Dunstan (Trinidad)  
Jason Robert  
Jon Bankert  
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Guire  
Jude, Guardian, Provincial Secretary  
Justus (Papua New Guinea)  
Robert Hugh  
Richard

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Cecilia, Provincial Secretary  
Jean  
Pamela Clare  
Ruth (Family Link), Novice Guardian

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

Australia

6 BRISBANE Annetey, S. Philip

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Donald Campbell, Guardian, Provin.  
Francis Bursar  
Lionel  
William  
Novices: James Andrew

STROUD S. Bernadette  
Bruce-Paul, Novice Guardian  
Alfred BoonKong  
Christopher John (Korea),  
General Secretary  
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New Zealand

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Andrew Philip, Provincial Secretary  
Brian (Opononi)  
Damian Kenneth  
Graham  
Leo-Anthony, Guardian

EUROPE

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Damian (Holy Island)  
Edward  
Maximilian  
Oswin Paul  
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Anselm  
Desmond Alban, Provincial Secretary  
Novice: Lawrence

BIRMINGHAM S. Francis House

Angela Helen  
Gwenhyd Mary (Milford Haven)  
Hilary  
Judith Ann  
Maureen, General and Provincial  
Secretary

CAMBRIDGE S. Francis House

Patricia Clare (Llandewi Brefi)  
Alistair  
Martin, Guardian  
Martin Philip  
Michael (Hope Residential Home)  
Samuel  
Novice: Mark Edmund

LONDON

16 BRIXTON  
Catherine Joy (Liverpool)  
Christine James, Provincial Bursar  
Gina  
Joyce  
Nan

COMPTON DURVILLE

S. Francis Convent  
Beverley, Novice Guardian  
Helen Julian  
Jackie  
Jannifer

Phyllis  
Sue, Guardian  
Teresa (Newcastle-under-Lyme)  
Novices: Jenniffer  
Liz

DUNDEE

12 DONCASTER  
Benjamin (Harborne, Birmingham)  
Malcolm  
Paul Anthony  
Novice: John

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18 HARURO S. Mary-of-the-Angels  
Anthony (Martyrs School)  
Daniel Gona  
Ham Kavaia (Martyrs School)  
Harold Joinoba, Novice Guardian  
Laurence Hauje, Guardian  
Philip Etobae  
Selwyn Suna  
Timothy Joseph (hermitage)  
Novices: Dominic  
Duddy Adia  
Gabriel  
Lucas  
Rodney  
Worrick

HAUTAMBU La Verma

22 HAUTAMBU La Verma  
Aigy Lent Fugui  
Andrew Manu  
Andrew Nalua, Guardian  
Athanasius Fafu, Regional Minister  
Gabriel Maelasi  
Geoffrey Gerefooa  
James Sou  
Winston Paoni, Novice Guardian  
Novices: Christopher Nanate  
Hartman Dena  
Hill Cliff Tahaangi  
Hilton Togara  
Hudson Filiga  
Ison Waisi  
John Kogudi  
John Patteson Linga  
Jonas Tuu  
Leslie Cecil Sukadi  
Oscar Sade  
Wellington Hugo Maake

HAUTAMBU Little Portion

24 HAUTAMBU Little Portion  
Comitis Romano, Brother in Charge  
Francis Christopher Saemala  
Lionel Lakinyila

KATERADA S. Margaret's Friary

Wallace Yovero, Brother in Charge  
Novice: Owen  
Koke S. Francis Church  
Clifton Henry  
Gilson Kira, Regional Bursar  
Lester Meso, Brother in Charge  
Robert Eric

CHINATOWN, LAE Douglas House

20 CHINATOWN, LAE Douglas House  
Oswald  
UKAKA Philip's House  
Charles Iada  
Lester (Holy Name School, Dogura)  
Nathanael Gari  
Smith Tovebae, Brother in Charge  
ON LEAVE: Benstead Poroba  
Cecil Okun

SOLOMON ISLANDS Region

21 AUKI S. Francis Friary  
Colin (Frouala)  
Joel Keiemanah (Aitahu RTC)  
Martin Tawea  
Peter Ambuola (Aitulara RTC)  
Thomas Hereward Peleba,

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Damian  
Elizabeth  
Eise Felicity  
Gillian Clare  
Mary Kathleen  
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Meshach  
Egjin Tendai  
Peter  
Novices: Aaron  
Kashimiro

ORDER OF SAINT FRANCIS, Brazil

Cezari, Francisco and the other  
Brothers and Sisters

Our brothers and sisters in other communities and communions.

# SSF European Province Prayer Diary

## January to April 2004

<b>JANUARY 2004</b>	
4	Angelo
6	S.Francis, and also S.Andrew, Willesden
8	Epiphany Carol Service and Party, Compton Durville
9-11	Kevin
10	Augustine Thomas
10	Martin
11	Desmond Alban
12-16	SSF Formation Conference, Campion House, Osterley
16-18	Sue
16-18	Beverley, Liz
20	Helen Julian
20	Pascal
22	Oswin Paul
22-24	Sue
24	franciscan Editorial Board, Stepney
26-29	Helen Julian
27-29	Pascal
29-31	Richmond Deanery Clergy, Almhouse
30	Giles
30-1 FEB	Papua New Guinea Church Partnership meeting
31-1 FEB	Angelo
	S. Michael, Barnes

<b>FEBRUARY 2004</b>	
1-7	Giles
2-4	Pastoral Visit to Kent
6-8	Jonathan
8	Helen Julian
10	Phyllis
10-19	Samuel, Helen Julian, Beverley
	Gregory, Maximilian
13-15	Augustine Thomas
13-15	Retreat for S.Ninian's Comely Bank, Edinburgh, Almhouse
14	Austin
14-15	Jackie et al
14-16	Liz
15	Angelo
16-20	Oswin Paul
18	Philip Bartholomew
20-22	Kevin
20-23	Martin
21	Kentigern John
21	Teaching Week preparation visit, Ruspur, Sussex
21	Spirituality day, S.Columba's House, Woking
22	Philip Bartholomew
24	Phyllis
25-27	Alan Michael
26-29	Martin
27-29	Martin
27-29	Martin Philip
29-2 MAR	Alan Michael

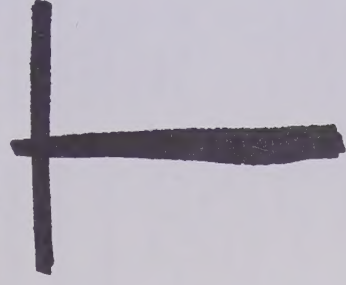
<b>MARCH 2004</b>	
3	Provincial Engagements Group meeting, Brixton
4	Sue
4	Desmond Alban
5-7	Exploring Spirituality Course, Wells
	London Area gathering, Gladstone Park
	Post-mission visit, S.Peter, Petersfield

5-7	Martin
5-7	Sue
5-7	Retreat, Irlingham parish, Hemmingford Grey
6	Beverley, Liz
6	Philip Bartholomew
9	Philip Bartholomew
9-10	Jennie
11-15	Vincent
12-14	Anselm
12-14	Sue
13	Martin Philip
13	Phyllis
13	Reginald
13-14	Martin
16	An Almhouse Brother
16	Sherborne Mothers' Union Quiet Day at Hilfield
16-24	Giles
19	Beverley, Liz
20	Helen Julian
20	Reginald
20	Sue
21	Angelo
23	Philip Bartholomew
24	Sue
26-28	Richard Seed TSSF
27	Pascal
27	Sue et al
29-1 APRIL	

<b>APRIL 2004</b>	
3	Jannafer
4-11	HOLY WEEK
	Chris
	Edward
	Giles
	John & another
	Kevin
	Martin
	Raymond Christian
	Reginald
	Angelo
8-11	Angelo
12-19	Angelo
16	Angelo
18	Agustine Thomas
19-23	Phyllis
20-23	Sue
22	Kevin
23-25	Kevin
24	Roger Alexander
25	Helen Julian, Jannafer, Sue
26-29	Helen Julian, Jannafer, Sue
27-1 MAY	Augustine Thomas, Maximilian
30-2 MAY	

Address changes and intercessions for the next edition of this leaflet should be sent to Desmond Alban at Birmingham at the latest by March 15th 2004

# THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS



Brothers and Sisters, pray for us . . .

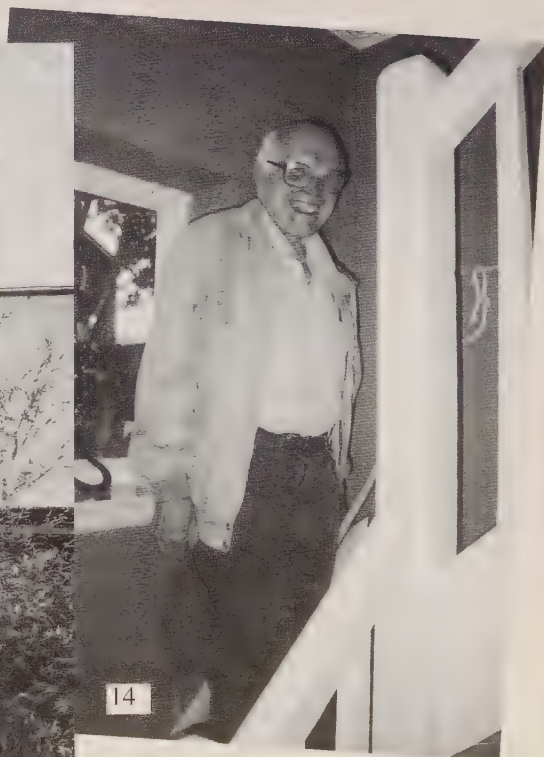
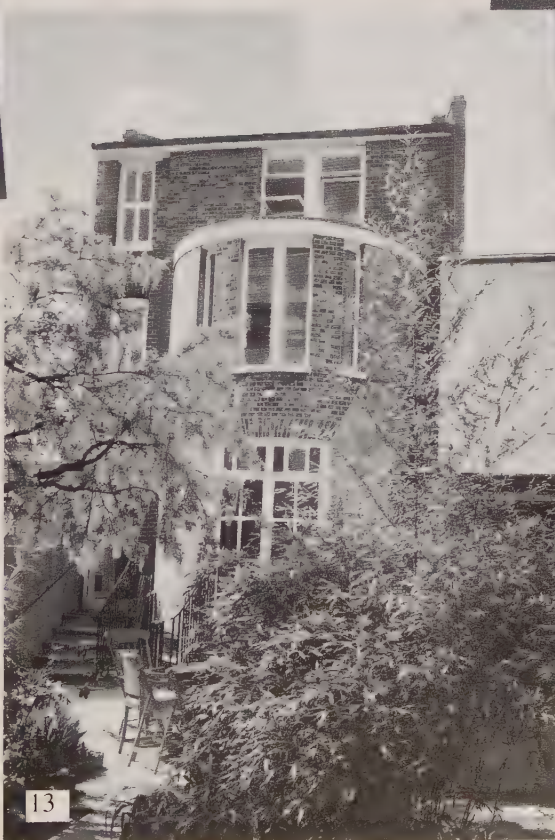
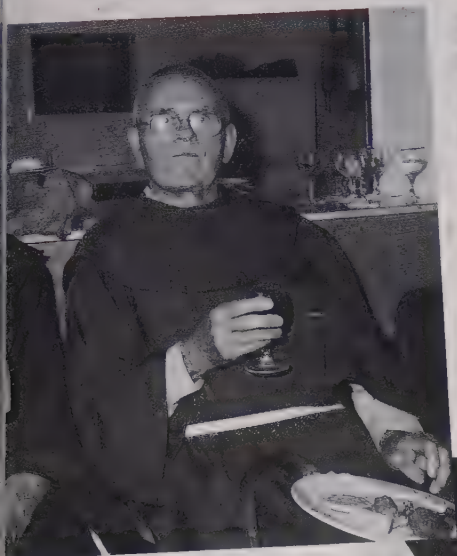
Lord Jesus,  
in your servant Francis  
you displayed the wonderful power  
of the cross.

Help us to follow you  
in the way of the holy cross,  
and give us strength to resist all temptation;  
to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
be all glory for ever . . .

And for our departed Brothers & Sisters . . .

January		March
1	Owen SSF 1981	4 David SSF 1994
2	Gwenda Mary CSCI 1987	7 Helen Elizabeth CSF 1950
8	John OSF 1956	Joseph OSF 1979
13	Harry SSF 2000	Arthur SSF 1990
17	Alfred SSF 1985	8 Margaret Mary CSF 1946
22	Lilian Agnes CSF 1968	10 Gabriel CSF 1999
23	Mark Charles SSF 1984	17 Thaddeus SSF 1995
	Alison Mary CSF 2003	20 Patrick SSF 1992
27	Simon SSF 1969	26 Gregory SSF 1971
29	Mary Dorothea PCRep 2000	27 Jeremy SSF 1966
February		28 William Sirr SDC 1937
1	Stephen Lambert SSF 1984	30 Anthony Jones SSF 1961
	Sebastian SSF 1985	31 Andrew SDC 1946
4	Barnabas SDC 1958	Jerome SSF 1986
9	Vivian SSF 1971	April
15	George Potter BHC 1960	5 Ian SSF 1991
24	Hugh OSF 1967	13 Christopher SSF 1973
26	Mark Francis SSF 1996	14 Edgar SSF 1995
28	Hubert SSF 2003	19 Randall SSF 1983
		21 Alban SSF 1989
		Elizabeth Ann CSF 2001
		27 Mary Clare CSF 1963

# y in pictures



# Plaistow Friary

## - An Update

The train emerges from its burrow at Whitechapel and rumbles eastwards towards the Essex suburbs. There are no gradients on these reclaimed Thames mudflats - we leave the city and enter another world, another village, different concerns, different gossip. The visitor alights at Plaistow, passes the East London Cemetery - and near the junction of Balaam Street and Barking Road stands the House of the Divine Compassion - no. 42, for short.

Once the home of a retired sea captain, since 1894 it has been continuously a Franciscan friary. For the first fifty years or so it was the home of the, now sadly no more, Society of the Divine Compassion; since 1950 brothers and sometimes sisters of C/SSF have lived there and worked among the people of Plaistow (now a part of Newham). For the first two decades our life was bound up with St Philip's Church across the road - since we relinquished that responsibility the house has developed a life of its own, as a manifestation of the Divine Compassion in the neighbourhood where brothers and sisters (some in habits, some not) encounter and share God's love.

*The Divine Compassion is  
alive and well and active at  
42, Balaam Street.*

On his way from the station the visitor passed the last resting place of Father Andrew SDC. On arrival at no. 42 he is admitted by Daphne to the ... waiting room? At any rate, there he waits in comfort and watches. A photo of Father Andrew gazes down. Old clothes are being sorted in a room beyond where people chat. Beyond again, the rain forest looms. Brother Arnold appears, and soon four of us - Arnold, Penny, Brother Julian and the visitor penetrate the forest, following the path to the chalet chapel for Midday Prayer at which the reading is Father Andrew's poem 'Southend on Sea'. So - the Divine Compassion is alive and well and active at 42, Balaam Street.

Above the entrance to the house are two symbolic logos - clasped hands, and a tau cross; the cross for Francis, the hands for 'Helping Hands'. 'Helping Hands' is an organisation which has the use of the premises, is over 20 years old, and originated as an experiment in community self help. Brother Julian SSF was its founder, and has been living with it ever since. The values by which it lives are as follows - they make a lot more sense if you read them on the doorstep at the house, or in the 'waiting room' as people pass through - but here they are for you to read at home:-

- >Sharing and reflecting compassion.
- >Seeing everyone as important, as an

individual, and as a member of their community.

>Believing that everyone has something to give.

>Encouraging neighbourliness.

>Loving and caring for our neighbours as we would want to be loved.

>Helping people to overcome loneliness and social isolation.

>Belief in the value of volunteers and their contribution.

Helping Hands encourages volunteering, whether for gardening, odd jobs, housework, simple repairs or befriending, and depends on responsible, committed helpers - the volunteers. Daphne and Doreen work in the office, on the phone, keeping the lines of communication open, boiling the kettle - Daphne mornings, Doreen afternoons. Penny comes in from Southend and offers cooking, cleaning and - legal advice. Lots of people volunteer for practical jobs, and need to be connected with the customers - the elderly, the lonely, those in need of a helping hand.

Since 1995 the SSF component of no. 42 has been Julian, with a few brothers who have used the house as a base - perhaps most notably Brother Donald who for many years expressed the divine compassion as a prison chaplain from his home round the corner at 'The Hermitage', a nearby terrace house. He is living there now and celebrated his Golden Jubilee of priesthood in September, 2003 with a glorious Mass of Thanksgiving at St Alban's, Ilford.

*Helping Hands encourages  
volunteering ...to help the  
elderly, the lonely, those in  
need of a helping hand.*

Back to no. 42 which has been home to so many - brothers and sisters of C/SSF, other sisters and brothers many of whom have for the time had no other home. By the year 2001 the house itself was in need of tender loving care which could be postponed no longer, and was occupied by the builders. Unplanned delays meant that it was not until March, 2003 that it could be properly used once more, and there was an opportunity to make changes and have a fresh start. Helping Hands is re-established with some

new volunteers, it is hoped that a link will be made with Age Concern as much of the 'helping' is directed towards the elderly and often lonely of the neighbourhood.

And behind no.42 - the garden, conventional in the days of the friary - is now, the 'rain forest'. With expert help spectacular shrubs have transformed the approach to the bungalow at the bottom, creating a series of three arbours in which Moslem, Sikh, and Buddhist friends can sit quietly and feel welcomed by a manifestly Christian household. We can no longer look on the chalet itself as fit for human habitation (until drastic measures are taken), but the house chapel remains there, more of a tent than a temple!

42, Balaam Street proves to us that in these days of fewer brothers the divine compassion still overflows in Plaistow, and endorses the words of St Paul - 'When I am weak, then am I strong.'

P.S. *Hidden Lives*, - *Stories from the East End*, published in 1994 - 'A wonderful collection of faces and voices', writes Archbishop Rowan Williams - is available from Brother Julian at the Plaistow address, price £7. f

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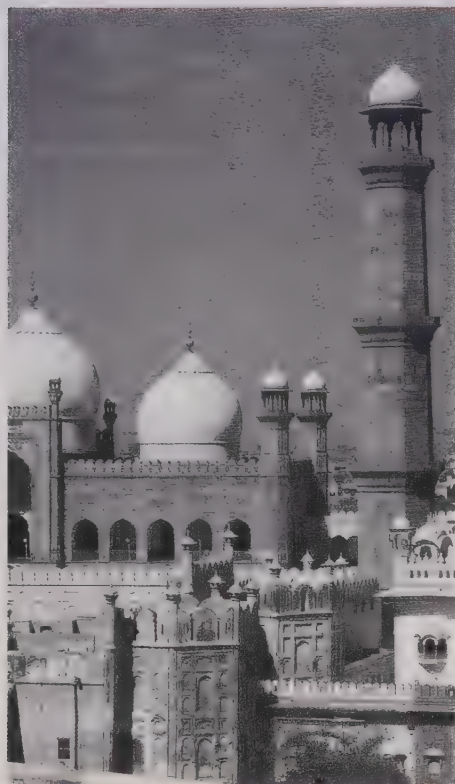
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# Community Routes



Badshahi Mosque, Lahore, Pakistan

## ◆◆ A late postcard from Pakistan

Thomas Anthony writes:

Alas, *Update from Pakistan* has turned into *Reminiscences of Pakistan*. My visa ran out, and I could not renew it beyond 8 August. There is always an official who decides these matters, quite arbitrarily, as many a Pakistani has discovered trying to extend their stay in a Western country. I was just finding my feet, and getting some idea of what I was doing, when the end came, prematurely. There were so many things to report on, so many new things still to be explored, but suddenly it's all become memory now....

Here are some memories:

I think back on the Church of St Thomas, Islamabad, with its network of education and health in various parts of the city, hidden behind walls. The visitor sees only the business and shopping areas and houses of the professionals. There's the church itself, the crowded Urdu services, old people and young joining in Punjabi Psalms, with portable harmonium and *tabla* (drums) for accompaniment. The rhythms are local and everyone seems to know the words, and claps the beat. When all the seats are taken, people sit on the floor, in the lotus position, even old folk seem able to get up and down from that position with ease. Memories are a sort of audio-visual tape of sights and sounds to be treasured, smells and tastes brought

back.

And the security everywhere. St Thomas' is especially well guarded, and the people at the gate like to know where I am going each time I leave the compound. Last year's attacks have not been forgotten.

One night two Muslim friends decide to take me to a Sufi shrine. It's a Thursday, the day associated with Sufi veneration of 'saints'. I particularly want to experience the traditional devotional music, the qawwali. The shrine chosen is not a famous one: it won't be so crowded there, I'm told. When we get there the place looks busy enough to me. We all move inside, where people make gestures of devotion to the saint. It's quite impressive to see so many hundreds at prayer. Then past the stalls selling the expected wares and on to the place of entertainment. There is no qawwali tonight. There is folkloric instrumental music. There is smoke wafting towards us and I am almost overcome by a smell familiar from elsewhere. Yes, it is.... *hashish*. I can make out several European types among the crowd. They haven't come because of the Saint. A few young men dance to the beat of the music. To the foreigner it's all more like a hippie happening than a devotional occasion, and quite a contrast to the reverence shown in the shrine itself.

I remember fondly people's generosity and hospitality. I went with misgivings about security there, but met only courtesy and friendliness. Nobody in the cities of Islamabad and Lahore ever indicated that they held my Christianity against me. At Lahore, my friend Khalid Mahmood took me to see the sights, proud of the city's heritage.

I pray for Pakistan, for all God's people there, and for the small minority of Christians. There are tensions, between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, between them and other groups. For how much longer will the Americans support President (General) Musharraf? And will he be able to hold out against so much opposition? Whatever develops there could have repercussions for Christians.

The good news for me is that USPG may yet be able to get me back there, in a different capacity. I hang on to that thread of hope.

## ◆◆ Hilfield's Secret Garden

Vincent writes:

What has become known as *The Secret Garden* was started in the late 1950's by Brother Simon. There is some evidence to suggest that it was ancient woodland and besides having a trickle of water flowing through the garden, it has lovely peaty soil.

Simon planted a number of trees including a *Davidia involunrata* (known as the handkerchief tree) which sadly has recently died, due to disease. In the early 1960s, Simon went out to Australia where he was killed in a climbing accident. Between 1978 and 1984 I was the Guardian of T'yr Brodyr in Llandudno where Sister Gabriel asked me to help her with the garden, in particular the trees and shrubs and rhododendron. On returning to Hilfield in 1984, I began to clear the swamp as it was known in those days and begin some of the early planting. Then there was a gap of several years while I worked in New Zealand followed by a spell in Belfast and on my return here I began planting up the garden in earnest. My intention is to have colour and interest all the year round, with a whole range of plant material. In 1996 an invitation came from Catalyst Television to appear in the garden with Geoff Hamilton in a series entitled *Paradise Gardens*. This later turned out to be the very last series that Geoff Hamilton did. This programme gave the garden a certain amount of publicity and from this arose the idea of opening the garden to the wider public, via The National Gardens Scheme. The N.G.S. began in the late 1920's as a way of raising money for retired nurses and other needy groups of people. Our opening in May 2003 was again well supported and some £754 was raised. This included donations for our homemade teas and cakes. Visitors to the garden from the beginning have included all ages and this year we had our oldest visitor - a lady of 100 from Yeovil.

The garden will be open from 6 - 9 May 2004, between 2 and 5 pm.

## ◆◆ A Gardeners' Retreat at Compton Durville

'Several areas of garden were transformed, significant conversations took place in the flowerbeds, and people enjoyed each other's company as well as the peace and beauty of the convent gardens'.

Phyllis sums up the first 'Gardeners Practical and Prayerful' event at Compton Durville. Seven gardeners worked in the mornings, had the afternoons free to relax, walk or visit local houses and gardens, and gathered in the evening for a meditation on a horticultural theme, led by Phyllis. Any who wanted had the opportunity for discussion on spiritual matters with her, and all were welcome to join in the daily pattern of worship in the chapel. Two similar events have since taken place, drawing new people each time. Three more are planned in 2004; the Guest Sister at Compton Durville can

supply details.

'All returned home refreshed and inspired, although with a few aching muscles. Some also found themselves gifted with a fresh start, some new beginning with God'. (Quotations from the Diocese of Bath and Wells newspaper.)

## ◆◆ I was in prison...

Over the years, various brothers and sisters have been involved with prison ministry, as chaplains or on mission teams. Until recently, such ministry was a large part of **Donald's** life, and currently **James William** and **Gina** work as prison chaplains.

James William wrote the following piece about his work.

People are generally very curious as to the nature of life in prison. The only two ways to experience it are a) throw a brick through a jeweller's window, or b) be a member of the prison staff!

The illustration I often give is that of the B.B.C. serial, 'Porridge', starring the great Ronnie Barker. But, and it's a big but, in reality it is funnier and more painful. You can come across staff and inmates portrayed in the programmes who somehow appear to have stepped out from the television screen.

The Chaplaincy has the responsibility of informing inmates that one of their loved ones has died, or of breaking the good news that a new child has been delivered safely. Recently I was conducting a service and after delivering a sermon, a prisoner shouted, 'Good sermon, Brother!' To which I said, 'Thank you!' However, at the end of worship I was asked by the staff to inform the 70 inmates in church that a few hours earlier a prisoner had committed suicide.

I possess at home, a book in which I record real prison life hilarious events. I still laugh when I review them, all 75. Conversely, the other side of the coin is the pain, as I mentioned earlier. It is wise to carry a box of tissues because of all the tears shed when I interview men on their own. I always make sure that they have composed themselves before they return to their cells. The effect it has on Chaplaincy is simply, at the end of the day, I want to weep, or again, I am rolling around laughing at another classic.

We do well to remember that the Church has its share of people being imprisoned: St Paul, St Peter, St Francis, Bonhoeffer and our Lord himself, victim of a mockery of a trial. Franciscans have always had a place in their hearts for the imprisoned, after all our Blessed Lord said, 'when I was in prison, you visited me.'

## ◆◆ To be a pilgrim

**Mark Edmund** joined the The Pilgrims of St Francis for their summer pilgrimage and wrote the following about his time with them.

The Pilgrims of St Francis are an ecumenical group who come together for a week to follow the simplicity of life of St

Francis in a pilgrimage. The 2003 pilgrimage began in Romsey and ended in Winchester, a week walking through the beautiful Hampshire countryside.

The walking day usually started at 9.15am and that day's destination was reached by 4.00pm. Before starting off we began the day with prayers which were led by various members of the group, and a Eucharist was shared twice during the week with a final Eucharist in the Lady Chapel of Winchester Cathedral. Over the course of the week there was time each day for discussion, and for socialising and relaxing together in the evenings.

We were a band of 27 pilgrims who all took turns in cooking or map reading for the day and this year we were blessed by the weather, which was ideal for walking - dry but not too hot, and only one afternoon when it rained, so spirits remained high. Friendships were made or renewed and a sense of community was achieved and people looked out for one another so that nobody was left out. The walk was paced so that everybody could keep up no matter what age or walking experience they had.

This was my first walk with the Pilgrims and I found it to be so enriching and valuable an experience that I look forward to repeating it in 2004, and one that I would not hesitate to recommend to others.



*Mark Edmund and a Pilgrim in a kitchen en route between Romsey and Winchester.*

The Pilgrims of St Francis dates for 2004 are: International Chapter, 29-31 May in Canterbury, Kent; International Pilgrimage to Cantabria, Spain, 3-11 August; National UK Pilgrimage in the Chester area, 21-28 August. Anyone interested in any of these events should contact Stephen Isitt, 25 Renfrew Court, Allfrey Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 7SZ.

## ◆◆ Greenbelt

*Christine James writes:*

Arts and altars, boilers and bouncy castles, camping and cinema, just some of the aspects of life at the Greenbelt Festival. Taking place over the August Bank Holiday weekend at Cheltenham Racecourse, this Christian Arts Festival, with over 14,000 participants, has something for everyone from playgroups and children's activities through bands and orchestras, dance, poetry and art installations to workshops, seminars and panels on aspects of life and faith today.

The Franciscans, a group of gathered people forming an open, welcoming community within the larger community of the Festival, have participated in the Festival for many years. This year the core of First Order members was **Christine James**, **Maureen** and **John** who were joined by 14 others aged from 18 months to over 50. They offered Morning, Evening and Night Prayer and a daily Eucharist from their base in the heart of the camping area. For many Festival visitors, Night Prayer, said under the light of candle lanterns and followed by a cup of hot chocolate, is part of their annual Greenbelt experience. Others drop by for a chat or just to have somewhere to sit quietly. Another feature of our camp is the prayer tent, an oasis of calm in the hustle and bustle of the Festival.

Highlights of Greenbelt 2003, the Thirtieth Festival, included the main Sunday Eucharist, a set by Billy Bragg, talks by Anita Roddick and John Bell and a Trade Justice Carnival. A Good time was had by all. Literally.

## ◆◆ RIP

Brother David Stephen died on 21 September, at Alnwick Infirmary. He was aged 89 years and in the twenty-fourth year of his profession. His funeral was held at Alnmouth Friary on 2 October. His obituary is on page 16. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

## ◆◆ Roundup

Liz Heaton was clothed as a novice on St Francis' Day, 4 October, taking the name **Liz**. **Joyce** spent a month from mid-October in Palestine, under the auspices of the International Women's Peace Service. The next issue of *franciscan* will include something of her experiences there. **Catherine Joy** has moved to Liverpool, where she will continue to explore her hermit vocation. The brothers in Birmingham have moved to another house about 100 metres from their former one, and continue to be involved in schools and with young people and their families on the local estate. The move from Glasgow to Dundee took rather longer than expected to happen, but **Amos** and **Moyra** now have the addresses of two flats on an estate at Mid Craigie, Dundee. **Stuart** will join them when the flats are ready for occupancy; meanwhile he is at Alnmouth Friary. **Colin Wilfred** has returned to the UK and is living at the Canterbury friary; **Oswin Paul** stayed there during the Michaelmas Term while he was studying at the Franciscan International Study Centre. **John** has moved to Doncaster and **Lawrence** to Birmingham. **Thomas Anthony** is covering an interregnum for six months in a parish in the Diocese of Montreal, Canada. **Benedict** has been appointed the Novice Guardian for the brothers in the European Province. *f*

## Book Reviews

Brother Roger of Taizé  
**God's Love Alone**  
 ISBN 0- 8264- 7020- 3

*Continuum, English translation 2003, £8.99*

This is a book of great simplicity, but also of great profundity. It is the fruit of Brother Roger's prayer and reflection on the questions young people bring to Taizé. It is the product of his listening. But it also arises from his life in the Community from which he draws his examples.

The characteristic Taizé themes are here, simplicity, joy, community, how to find meaning in your life. The opening chapter asks, 'Are there realities which make life beautiful?' He says that trust, hope and peace of heart are what make a life beautiful. We don't need to be clever or gifted to lead meaningful lives which are a gift to others. This meaning is to be found in opening ourselves, to trusting ourselves to the mystery of love, which lies at the centre of our being. The chapter on The Breath of Trusting tackles the barriers to trust. He says to think that God condemns human beings is one of the greatest obstacles to faith. There is no threat in the name of God. He is never the tormentor of the human conscience (page 32). Indeed he says every human being is invited into communion with God (page 49).

However, there is grit here, too. He comments on the questions frequently asked, 'How can I be myself? How can I fulfil myself?' Christ does not say to me, 'Be yourself'. He says, 'Be with me'. Christ does not tell us, 'Find yourself'. He says, 'You follow me'.

The final chapter consists of three letters to young people summarising the main themes of the book. It is for them he writes. It is their hearts he seeks to touch. He longs to share with them that joyful reality and presence whom he clearly knows, loves and delights in. I hope many will discover this book and learn from Brother Roger's wisdom.

*The R. Rev. John Austin*  
*Bishop of Aston*

Leslie Griffiths  
**Voices from the Desert**  
*A Spirituality for our Times*  
 ISBN 1-85311-491-X

*Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2002, £7.99*

These voices from the desert inhabit the cultural wildernesses of the second half of the twentieth century. They begin with Kerouac and Ginsberg of the Beat Generation, then range through the anger of African Americans in the 1960s and through the barren landscapes of post-industrial Wales. A chapter on Haiti follows as an interlude before the collection concludes with a hearing for novelists Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi and their post-colonial perspective of Britain.

Griffiths admits that together they form an

eclectic choice but that a common thread of alienation weaves amongst them. He writes candidly and intelligently about how some of these voices have shocked him into a change of outlook - a realisation that the gulf between the gospel proclaimed by the churches and those on the margins of our society is vast indeed. This is the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book and Rowan Williams teases out the underlying theme in his foreword: "How did a faith whose origins had so much to do with life at the margins become so awkward at engaging with the experience of the marginal in the modern period?"

Liberation theology has been an attempt to bridge this cultural gap. Griffiths spent ten years of his ministry in Haiti and says that the experience humbled and healed him. He gives a general account of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Ti Legliz, Haiti's liberation theology movement. Though the account is fascinating I wanted to know more about how Griffiths' time there, in the parish of the poor, had helped to form him. A deeper reflection on his personal experience here would have provided a counterbalance to the rich literary fare which he serves so appetisingly.

*Colin Mansley*

Anselm Gruen (tr. John Bowden)  
**Images of Jesus**  
 ISBN 08264 6782 2 (paperback)  
*Continuum, 2002, £9.99*

This is not a book of systematic theology but it does seek to illumine both the Jesus of devotion and the historical Jesus, and so provides an answer to the question, 'Who is Jesus?' Or, rather, it provides many such answers for this is a book of fifty different 'images of Jesus' and none of them provides a final answer: As Gruen himself says, 'in the end of the day we can't grasp Jesus... he keeps evading all the terms we use of him.'

The fifty images in this book then are

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simply ways of looking at Jesus, sometimes from a new angle and sometimes with fresh light from a familiar viewpoint. Thus we have 'Jesus the Good Shepherd' and 'Jesus the teacher' alongside more provocative titles such as 'Jesus the drop-out' and 'Jesus the family therapist.' For each, a meditation of about two sides of print is followed by a paragraph of questions where the reader's work really begins, for they provoke and challenge us to use what we have discovered in order to examine our own lives and deepen our prayer. This is not a process to be rushed! Gruen suggests living for a while, perhaps a day or a week, in the light of one of these images before rushing on to the next one, and for my own part I shall want to come back to the individual images more than once.

Anselm Gruen is a German Benedictine monk and this book is the fruit of the reflections of a small group meeting in the monastery to discuss spiritual questions and the issues of today. He candidly shares his own experiences of encountering Jesus both in prayer and in life in a moving epilogue of several sections, whilst a prologue provides some clear historical background to the life of Jesus, as well as guidelines in the use of these meditations. Occasionally I was unconvinced by an over-psychoanalytical approach to some gospel stories, but Gruen himself recognises that there is no need to take on board everything he has written. There is much here to challenge all of us to a deeper devotion and a fuller discipleship in the way of Jesus.

*Desmond Alban SSF*

Jonathan Sacks  
**The Dignity of Difference**  
*How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations*  
 ISBN 0 8264 6397 5:  
*Continuum, London and New York, 2002*  
 £10.99

This inexpensive, beautifully written, mould-breaking book is unlikely to be read by those most in need of its message: a call to delight in our differences - because they are God made. But differences also cause divisions. Ones between rich and poor countries, between the world's great religions. The jury is out on which way things will go: towards a fairer sharing of resources and technologies, a stronger sense of responsibility for vulnerable cultures, an acceptance of unfamiliar religious creeds and practices - or growing conflict between the haves and the have-nots, bitter battles over ownership of the truth.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the size of the issues, to feel impotent spectators as we watch the world in action on TV - the prodigious struggles for control of territory, of resources, of food supplies we are powerless to affect. But there are, thankfully, quarrels closer to home we can resolve: ones in families and at work, with our fellow Christians. Clashes, say, about women priests, gay priests, the Bible, abortion: views that challenge strongly held

opinions we are determined to hold on to at all cost.

And so we should - so long as we recognise that everyone else feels the same way about their beliefs and we are uplifted rather than infuriated by people who refuse to fall into line. 'The test of faith,' Dr. Sacks writes, 'is whether I can make space for difference. Can I recognise God's image in someone who is not my image, whose language, faith, ideals are different from mine?' If, every day, I could welcome just one small point of difference that separates me from someone I am close to, or cannot avoid, the inner freedom this brought might, like the grain of mustard seed in the Gospel story, grow to visible proportions.

**Andrew Anderson**

Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev

**The Mystery of Faith**

**An Introduction to the Teaching and Spirituality of the Orthodox Church**

ISBN 0 232 52472 6

DLT, London, 2002, £12.95

This is a book from the heart of Orthodoxy, and demonstrates the continuity of the tradition throughout the centuries. Bishop Hilarion's personal contacts with the tradition in this country date back to his studies here and he is able to quote from contemporary writers in the West as well as from the early writers. For some people, his affinity with St Symeon the New Theologian and St Isaac of Syria will be sufficient recommendation.

The Mystery of Faith sets out to be an introduction to Christian doctrine, prayer and worship. There are sections on the Search for Faith, God, The Trinity, Creation, The Human person, Christ, The Church, The Sacraments, Prayer, Deification, and the Life of the Age to Come. There are quotations, sometimes lengthy, from the early Fathers, from Orthodox writers throughout the centuries, and from modern writers such as Anthony Bloom, St Silouan and Fr Sophrony, Fr Lev Gillet and many others. The choice is not limited to the Orthodox but includes Aeschylus and Einstein!

Some quotations which may give a taste of the book are:

'Let us glorify the Greatest of artists who has created the world in wisdom and refinement.' (St Basil)

'To know that there exists a hidden Reality which is revealed to us as the highest Beauty and to feel this - this is the core of true spirituality.' (Einstein)

'The human person forms the centre and crown of God's creation.' (Bishop Kallistos)

'The assurance of the salvation of all cannot

be an assurance of faith, because there is no clear and affirmative statement about this in Holy Scripture; but it can be an assurance of hope, because, knowing God as we know him, we have the right to hope for everything.' (Metropolitan Anthony)

'It is not the way of the compassionate Maker to create rational beings in order to deliver them over mercilessly to unending affliction and punishment for things of which he knew even before they were fashioned.' (St Isaac the Syrian)

To declare an interest, the book is ably edited by a friend of our community, Jessica Rose.

**Gillian Clare OSC**

The Franciscan Association of Great Britain

Editors: Damian Kirkpatrick SSF, Fr Philip Doherty OFM Conv, Sr Sheelagh O'Flynn FMDM

**Joy in all Things**

**A Franciscan Companion**

ISBN 1 85311 409 X

Canterbury press, Norwich, 2002, £12.99

All Franciscans in these islands, indeed, in the English-speaking world, owe an immense debt of gratitude to the editors and publishers of this compendium and companion. It stands as a monument to the spirit of Francis and Clare which at the dawn of the third millennium CE provides a bond which unites Franciscans across the boundaries of nation, denomination and gender. Make no mistake, this book is an achievement.

The nature of the Franciscan heritage makes the editors' task a difficult one. How can the charism be organised? Our editors were not daunted, and have boldly drawn a map whose areas have been filled in by 18 Franciscan women and men, some Roman Catholic, some Anglican, some with no formal affiliation within the Franciscan movement.

Inevitably, the quality of the writing is not uniform; we will all find gems, we will all find points to question, we will all have regrets. This reviewer was especially delighted by the previously unpublished 'Story of Francis' from the pen of the late Bishop John V. Taylor, and by Martin Shaw's pilgrimage in Assisi. Other readers will find their own favourites.

A disappointment - on page 72 there is a passing reference to the Will (Testament) of Francis. This document was intended to be read with the Rule at chapters, and to be understood, with the Rule, 'plainly and simply'. The Testament, composed by Francis without the assistance of canon lawyers, is crucial to the understanding of his

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mind and heart - yet, the text is missing from this otherwise splendid book.

Never mind - it will surely be there in the second edition. We must all make sure that a second edition is soon needed!

**Anselm SSF**

Frank Monaco

**Brothers and Sisters**

**Glimpses of the Cloistered Life**

ISBN 0 232 52436 X

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 2001, £14.95

This is a beautiful book. It consists of pictures of monks and nuns, mostly from enclosed communities, and the convents and monasteries in which they live. Accompanying the pictures are short quotes from texts such as the Rule of St. Benedict, the Cistercian Rule, and the Way of Perfection by St. Teresa of Avila. The pictures are all in black and white, but then so are most of the people in the photographs, with all in full habit, choir robes or working clothes.

Frank Monaco is a professional photographer, and you can tell his skill by the subtle use of shades of light and dark which bring a great sense of stillness to the scenes depicted. The camera itself seems not to be there, testifying to the unobtrusiveness of the photographer in his work.

Although only recently published, my guess is that the photographs have been taken over a period of several years. But that does not detract from the immediacy of the scenes, or the sense of being present in these enclosed communities. What lingers most in the memory are the wonderful faces captured here, full of serenity and gentle humour.

**Nicholas Alan SSF**

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Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury: [www.franciscans.ac.uk](http://www.franciscans.ac.uk)

Korean Franciscan Brotherhood: [www.francis.or.kr/](http://www.francis.or.kr/)

Celebrating Common Prayer: [www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/](http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/)

Exciting Holiness: [www.oremus.org/liturgy/e-h/](http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/e-h/)

Anglican Religious Communities' Year Book: [www.orders.anglican.org/arcb/](http://www.orders.anglican.org/arcb/)

Church of England: [www.church-of-england.org/](http://www.church-of-england.org/)

Anglican Communion: [www.anglicancommunion.org/](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/)

# Brother David Stephen SSF, RIP

A sermon preached at his funeral, by Brother Samuel SSF

'Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.'

My first contact with David was on the squash court. I was then a very junior curate in Liverpool and Canon David Stevens, leader of the Liverpool Industrial Mission team, had just moved into 68, Laurel Road with a group of Franciscan brothers. There had recently been a Franciscan Mission in our parish and I was interested in Franciscan things; I thought that this might be a way of developing the link. Besides, David was a member of the rather posh Racquets Club on Upper Parliament St and I was thinking that he might help me to become a member too. I reckoned that because of the disparity between our ages (34 years) I might need to hold back a bit with my game, but, on the court he ran rings around me. I hardly scored a point, and in the shower afterwards he told me of his plan to celebrate his 60th birthday by climbing the three highest peaks in England, Wales and Scotland! Despite my humiliation we became friends - he even helped me to improve my game a little - and within a few years we were both brothers in the Society of St Francis.

**Brother David Stephen  
SSF**

**died on 21 September  
2003 in hospital in  
Alnwick and his funeral  
mass was at Alnmouth  
Friary.**

**He was aged eighty-nine  
years and in the twenty-  
fourth year of his  
profession in vows.**

At that time, some 28 years ago, more than two thirds of David's life had already happened. King Edward's School and the Toc H days in Birmingham; then the army and war service. He was wounded by 'friendly fire' in March '45 after the crossing of the Rhine. When peace came Col. Stevens was appointed Military Governor of Kreis Dannenberg, the most easterly district of the British zone of occupation. Among all the various tasks within his responsibility, not least finding food for a starving population, David established what he claimed was the first post-Hitler Youth Club in Germany. Out of RAF auxiliary fuel tanks, which he had commandeered, canoes were made for outdoor activities; they

named themselves the 'Dannenberg River Pirates'. I can see David enjoying all that enormously - there was always a great sense of boyish fun in him.

But it wasn't all just 'Boys Own' stuff. Later on David was to write: 'a powerful ideology cannot be replaced by table tennis, juke boxes and all that. It seemed to me that it was only the Christian faith which could meet the need with all its challenges, hopes and possibilities of new life; indeed I could see it happening in the young men working with me in the various groups that were getting off the ground.' Two of the young men who became Christians through David's example and encouragement went on to become pastors in the German Church.

By the time the work in Germany was coming to an end David's own mind and heart were being drawn towards the priesthood. He was ordained in Liverpool in 1952 to a curacy in Wigan and then became Priest-in-Charge of St Paul's, Litherland.

In 1957 he was asked by Bishop Martin to work with the Liverpool Industrial Mission. He was joined by our Br Ronald and over the following 20 years they and others pioneered and established a way of working with both management and those on the shop floor that valued human life and experience and witnessed to the reconciling and transforming love of Christ.

And then, when most people would be thinking of and planning for retirement, David joined us brothers (he had been a member of the Franciscan Third Order for some years already). He has been professed in vows for 23 years - years full of missions and school visits, preaching and teaching, gardening and YMCA trips to Mull; years of friendship and fun and fishing.

What strikes me when reading about David's life - and we've received many letters paying tribute to him - is the number of lives which have been touched by him; those who have not just been helped or advised by him, but who have been given a sense of the worth and dignity and enjoyment of human life through him.

'Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.' For the work of God's grace in and through David Stephen we give great thanks today.

We've also come together today to welcome 'Sister Death'. Last night, here in the chapel, we sang that verse of the Canticle of the Creatures which was composed by St Francis shortly before his own death:

*By death our sister praised be  
From whom no one alive can flee  
Woe to the unprepared.*

*But blest be those who do your will  
And follow your commandments still.*

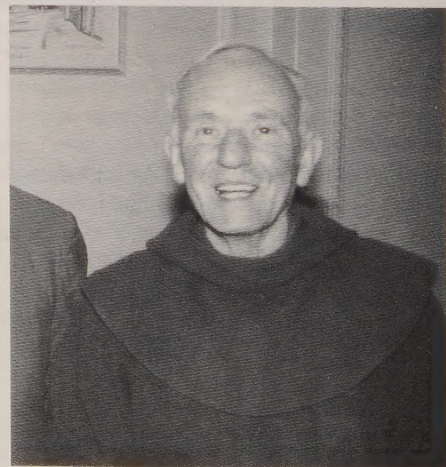
That praise of Sister Death is not just a

postscript. The joyful letting go, the stripping bare, the dying to oneself, is at the heart of the Franciscan and the Christian life. There's a sense in David's life that Sister Death was embraced a long time ago. In the past few years that letting go, that stripping bare, has had a certain poignancy and sadness about it. We owe a debt of gratitude to both the staff at Castle View, Alnwick, who have cared for him and also to the brothers at Alnmouth who have supported him. Now Sister Death has helped him to his true home. And David, who in this life with us has but glimpsed the love and glory of God, we now commend to the unfathomable fullness of God's mercy and compassion.

As well as giving thanks for David, we are also celebrating the hope in which he stood and in which we ourselves stand. We celebrate that David Stephen's life has been a witness that Christ has conquered death and hell, and that in our own lives and in our world evil and sin and all that is wrong do not have the last word - they will not prevail. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist - perhaps most especially at a funeral - we look in hope for, and align ourselves with, a world transformed by the love of God in Jesus Christ.

David left instructions for his funeral to be joyful. He also wrote: 'I hope heaven isn't all saying prayers.....perhaps some singing would be good. No doubt I shall be able to sing even more beautifully then.' (He couldn't sing a note!!) The foundation of our joy today - and of David's - is our hope in and through Jesus Christ. The Gospel reading we've heard, of the house on the rock and the house on the sand, was a favourite of David's. He would say that people don't listen to it properly, to what it's really saying. 'People,' said David, 'think it's about making sure that one's life has a good basis. But it's not saying that at all. It's saying to us 'Build your life on the Lord Jesus Christ'.'

To the God of Jesus Christ, our sure foundation, be all honour, praise and glory for ever. f



**Brother David Stephen SSF**